Amendments to the Claims

1.   (Currently amended) A method of administering identifying characteristics in a computer, comprising the steps of:

inputting an identifying characteristic from a user;

checking the identifying characteristic as it is being inputted and without user intervention for conformance with one or more check criteria;

upon inputting of an identifying characteristic meeting the check criteria, enabling a selection facility for subsequent actuation by the user to transmit the identifying characteristic to an identifying characteristic processing device, the selection facility remaining disabled until the inputted identifying characteristic meets the check criteria; and

transmitting the identifying characteristic to the identifying characteristic processing device upon enablement of the selection facility and subsequent actuation of the selection facility by the user to transmit the identifying characteristic to the device.

2.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:

notifying the user during input as to whether the selection facility has been enabled.

3.   (Cancelled)

4.   (Original) The method of claim 1 in which, if the identifying characteristic comprises several components, the check is performed for each component individually.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 1 in which, during the check, the deviation of the identifying characteristic from the check criteria is established, and the input operation is aborted if a specific degree of deviation is exceeded.

6.   (Currently amended) A device for administering identifying characteristics in a computer, comprising:

means for inputting an identifying characteristic from a user;

a check device for checking the identifying characteristic as it is being inputted and without user intervention for conformance with one or more check criteria;

a selection facility for actuation by the user when enabled to transmit the identifying characteristic to an identifying characteristic processing device;

means responsive to inputting of an identifying characteristic meeting the check criteria for enabling the selection facility for subsequent actuation by the user, the selection facility remaining disabled until the inputted identifying characteristic meets the check criteria; and

means responsive to enablement of the selection facility and subsequent actuation of the selection facility by the user for transmitting the identifying characteristic to the identifying characteristic processing device if the identifying characteristic meets the check criteria.

7.   (Previously presented) The device of claim 6, comprising means for informing the user during input as to whether the selection facility has been enabled.

8.   (Cancelled)

9.   (Previously presented) The device of claim 6, comprising means for checking each component individually if the identifying characteristic comprises several components.

10.   (Original) The device of claims 6, comprising:

means for establishing a deviation of the identifying characteristic from the check criteria; and

means for aborting the input operation if a specific degree of deviation is exceeded.

11.   (Cancelled)

12.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 in which the identifying characteristic is a password and one of the check criteria is a matching of a first entry of the password with a second entry of the password.

13.   (Cancelled)

14.   (Previously presented) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform the method steps of claim 1.

15-19. (Cancelled)